

Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Stephanie Chandler. I am an Adult Advocate and Program Coordinator at the Rape Crisis Center of Milford. I was a student at the University of New Haven for both my Masters and Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. Today, I am writing in support of HB 6374 both as an advocate and an alumnus.

My first interaction with campus sexual assault came no more than a month after being on campus. I received a call at 6am from a floor mate of mine, who had lost her badge to enter the dormitory building. When I came downstairs and saw her, my heart broke. She was crying and wearing paper hospital pants and an old t shirt. She asked me for \$20 to pay the cab driver that had just dropped her off. I let her in, put her on the couch in the front lobby, and ran out to the cab to pay him. When I came back and asked her what had happened, she said she had been assaulted at "the baseball house". Unfortunately, most of my campus sexual assault education had come from peers, telling me which sports and fraternity houses to stay away from or make sure I always brought my own drink, and right away I believed her. She told me how she had been dropped off at the hospital by someone at the party, who then went home themselves. She endured the entire evidence collection kit alone, then was sent home in a cab. No resources, no advocacy, no support. She dropped out of school soon after.

I share this story because the phrase "knowledge is power" can mean so much more in a situation like my friend's. If she had known there was a center like the Rape Crisis Center before engaging in classes, she could have known her rights as a victim at the hospital. Perhaps another student would have been conscious enough at the party to intervene. Perhaps the person who dropped her off would have known how to support her or who to call. Perhaps if the school had known this particular sports team had been a problem, they would have provided intervention before the school year started. She was terrified of getting in trouble for underage drinking, perhaps if she had known she would be okay, she could have finished out her education at UNH.

Knowledge is power can mean something to campus administrations too. Receiving anonymous information from the student body as frequently as possible can help to identify problem areas to focus on. (In my case, information/repeated peer accounts of certain campus groups that were known for taking advantage of over-intoxicated women). Conclusions from which new policies and initiatives can be created. A 4-year survey is not enough to catch the invaluable input from every student attending the university. A 2-year survey would not only increase the data collected from the student body, but also give the University a chance to show students who have provided their input that they are listening and actively trying to make them safer. When students feel as if they are heard, they will feel much more comfortable coming forward and confident in the notion that the institution has their back.

I thank the legislators, staff, survivors and fellow advocates for taking the time to hear my testimony today. I hope that all voices are respected and heard, and that we can collectively move forward on HB 6374 to protect our current and future students.

